

Fibre Fun For Kids

By Tracey Kuffner

Since it is Summer again and we at “The Wool Mine” are in full swing with our Fibre Art Camps for Kids, I thought an article featuring a couple of fun crafts you can do with your kids would be a good idea.

I realize that by the time this article comes out our children will back at school, but these crafts will also make wonderful birthday and Christmas gifts and can be expanded upon to be even bigger and better. I'll leave it to your imagination as to how you can do that.

The first craft I want to describe is felted flowers. This is a wonderfully easy, quick project that, when finished, can be used in so many different ways.

What you need:

- Colored wool, llama or alpaca
- Small bamboo blind or bamboo place mat
- Dish soap and a jam jar with holes in the lid for sprinkling water on your wool

What to Do:

1. Select the colors you want to use for your flowers.
2. For each petal of your flower pull a small tuft of wool the size you want your petal to be (approx two inches long and one inch wide) and form it into that shape and place them on your bamboo blind.
3. Make 3 or 4 more petals and form them in a Circle with the ends overlapping.
4. Now put a different color of wool in the middle to create the centre of the flower.

Make as many of these as you wish using different colors. Experiment by putting two colors on each petal, or maybe put dots on top of the centres of your flowers for added detail.

5. Now that your flowers have been laid out on the blind, drizzle a small amount of dish soap on each flower (a couple of



No 2 First flower petal



No. 3 Flower with centres overlapped



No. 4 Flower ready to be felted



No 6 Rolling the flower in the blind

6. Roll the blind up as tight as you can. Roll it back and forth for approximately five minutes, making sure the soap and water are slightly running out of the blind equally across the blind where ever there are flowers.



Finished Flowers



7. Unroll the blind carefully as the wool will stick to it a little the first time you unroll it. Roll the blind up again, from the opposite end this time, and roll for five more minutes. Unroll again and give the flowers a quarter turn, repeat until the flowers have been turned 360 degrees.

8. Flip the flowers over and roll again for five minutes. Your flowers should now be done.

9. Rinse out the finished flowers as the soap will rot them over time.

If you find that your flowers feel soft and you would like them to be more dense, rub them between your hands for a few minutes. Here at “The Wool Mine Fibre Art Camp” we turn our flowers into book marks, brooches, purse embellishments and much more. See what you can do with them but don’t forget to have fun.

The Second Craft

I want to share with you felted soft pot. This craft requires almost no effort by you - your washing machine does most of the work.

What you need:

- Colored wool, llama or alpaca
- Plastic shopping bags
- Masking tape or duct tape
- Old nylons or knee high nylons
- Washing machine

What to do:

1. Take five or six plastic bags and roll them into a ball. Using your tape completely wrap them so you cannot see any of the bags. Try to compress the ball as you wrap it with the tape. If you want a bigger container use more bags.
2. Select the colors of wool you want for your soft pot and completely wrap your bag ball with wool, making sure the entire ball is covered. I like to make strips with the wool so that I can wrap the ball quite tight. You may want to secure the wool by needle felting it if you have a felting needle.
3. Now put the wool wrapped ball into one leg of the nylons and push it to the toe. Tie a knot right above the ball squishing the ball as tightly into the toe of the nylon as you can. I like to make several containers at one time so I keep filling the leg of the nylon and tying knots until I get to the top.
4. Now we are ready to put the nylons with the balls into the washing machine. Set the machine on its longest, most vigorous cycle using a hot wash, cold rinse. If you are making only one or two balls make sure you wash some heavier clothes, like jeans, with them. They



No 1 Plastic bag ball form



No 2 Wrapping the form with wool



No 4 Ready for washing



No 5 Removing the ball from the nylon



Removing the plastic form



Finished felted pots

need some good banging while washing to make them felt well. Front loading machines do not require any extra clothing for banging purposes.

5. After they have completed the vigorous wash cycle take them out and cut the nylons at the knots so you can remove the ball.
6. Using a sharp knife (ie. Wilshire knife) make a slice where you want the top of your soft pot to be. Slice deep enough to reveal the plastic bag ball.
7. Push the ball out and Voila! You have a beautiful soft pot.

Try gluing shells or beads around your pot for decorations and have fun thinking of what to put in it. To harden your soft pot, paint both the inside and outside with water based, clear coat varnish.

These are just two of the crafts I do with children to show them some of the many ways you can have fun with fibre. I hope you enjoy trying these projects and expand on them to produce even more.

Once again, I wish you happy felting and I hope to see all of you somewhere along the way.

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About the Author:

Tracey Kuffner, a graduate of Olds College, lives with her family on an eighty acre farm near Duchess, Alberta. She is the owner and operator of The Wool Mine, a gift gallery specializing in one of a kind, hand felted clothing and collectibles created using wool, llama and mobair from animals raised on their farm.

Tracey is now on-line at www.woolmine.com